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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE GROUP  
INTELLIGENCE REPORT

COUNTRY Italy

DATE: 25X1A

SUBJECT Change in the Directorate of the South  
Tirol Volkspartei (SVP)

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ORIGIN

SUPPLEMENT

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1. At the SVP party rally, held in Bolzano on 9 and 10 February, the new Directorate of the party was elected by some 550 delegates representing the 72,000 inscribed party members. The proceedings were fully reported in the local press. Unreported however, was a major crisis within the leadership of the party, which is reflected in the changes in the party directorate.

2. In the election of the new Directorate of the SVP a clash occurred between the more nationalistic elements, who demand a much more energetic policy in relations with Italy and the liberal elements, who favor moderation and a conciliatory attitude toward the Italians. A compromise solution was finally adopted, whereby the Presidency of the party remained in the hands of a representative of the liberal group, while a much stronger representation in the Central Committee and other high posts was secured by the Nationalist group. (Comment: A stronger and more positive policy may therefore be expected, especially as the President was forced by the mood of the delegates to commit himself to such a policy at the party rally. On the other hand, there is a possibility that incessant friction between the representatives of the two groups will lead to a weakening, rather than strengthening, of the party Directorate.)

During the weeks preceding the party rally dissatisfaction with the leaders of the SVP had been steadily mounting throughout South Tirol. In many parts of the Province, and particularly in the Pustertal, the party had fallen into disrepute. The South Tirolese have to date seen no tangible results of the Paris Agreement of 5 September. On the other hand they witness daily the continued "Italianization" policy of the Italian Authorities, and the old Italian abuses and repressive methods. In their disillusionment the South Tirolese have come to blame certain of their own leaders for the present unchanged situation. Charges of unjustifiable weakness and, in some cases, of betrayal of the South Tirol cause for personal interests have been preferred against the leaders in Bolzano.

4. This "opposition" within the party is centered in Bressanone and the Pustertal, and is led primarily by the clergy, has the backing of the great majority of the conservative peasants and is far more widespread than is generally assumed in Bolzano.

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5. It was mainly as the result of pressure from this opposition that the party rally was finally held on 9 and 10 February. Free elections of the party leaders offered to the opposition the only opportunity to turn out the weaker of the SVP leaders and to replace them by staunch nationalists, who would pursue a more energetic policy.
6. The most criticized of the SVP leaders have been the President, Erich Amann, and the former Secretary-General and close friend of Amann's, Dr. Raffener. It is widely believed in South Tirol that these two have been serving their own economic interests by "flirting with the Italians." (Comment: Although this charge could fairly be levied against other South Tirolese business men and merchants, it would seem to be completely unfounded in the case of Amann and Raffener. There is no doubt, however, that these two are somewhat defeatist in their attitude. Both are skeptical of the value of the Paris Agreement, and have little faith that Austria, the western democracies, or UN will be able to exert effective pressure on Italy. They are pessimists, and believe that in the end the South Tirolese may be abandoned to the mercy of the Italians. For this reason they attach considerable importance to maintaining the friendliest possible relations with the Italian Authorities.)
7. A few weeks ago a pamphlet, attacking Erich Amann, was distributed in South Tirol. As it calls for "a Catholic Party Direction for the Catholic people of South Tirol", it was believed in Bolzano that Bressanone church circles were responsible for it. In fact its author was a certain Herr Reichegger of Bressanone, a fanatical South Tirolese patriot, who recently distinguished himself by breaking up a meeting of the "Edelweiss" movement in Bressanone. At the same time there is no doubt that church circles applauded Reichegger's initiative and numerous South Tirolese priests have openly expressed their conviction that "only a Catholic party can save South Tirol".
8. Most popular of the SVP leaders among the opposition are Drs. Tinal and von Guggenberg, Baron Sternbach and Canon Camper. Since Dr. Tinal was compromised as a result of his role during the Nazi occupation of South Tirol, the opposition chose Dr. von Guggenberg as their leader. They planned to elect him as Secretary-General of the party in place of Raffener, and to replace Amann by the aged and universally respected champion of South Tirol, Baron Sternbach.  
  
(Comment: Dr. Volgger was also considered as a possible leader of the opposition. He enjoys great prestige among the masses, and has the reputation of a "fighter". He is rejected, however, by church circles owing to a remark of his made some months ago when he told the prelates of Bressanone that "he would enter into a pact with the Communists if he felt he could thereby serve the cause of South Tirol." Other members of the opposition have distrusted him of late because of his unconcealed admiration for, and support of, Amann.)
9. Both Guggenberg and Sternbach were prepared to accept the roles which the opposition had assigned to them. Sternbach required persuading but Guggenberg, a man of political ambition, accepted willingly, doubtless hoping to be born aloft on the wave of opposition.

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10. Neither Guggenberg nor Sternbach, however, is as radical as the majority of their backers. They feel that this is no time for pessimists and defeatists to lead the party, that the South Tirolese should stand up for their rights much more energetically, that they should regard the Paris Agreement as an almost sacred Charter guaranteeing their rights and should consequently insist on its application with the utmost resolution. They are also much more optimistic concerning the possibility of active support from Austria and the backing of the western democracies, and particularly of England. On the other hand they do not believe in an exclusively Catholic party, because they realize the importance of the collaboration of the liberal elements. They are opposed to drastic measures - at any rate for the time being, although both realize that the day will come when drastic measures will have to be taken, and that they must be prepared for it. They further believe that, although firmness is called for, it is too early yet to give up a certain conciliatory attitude toward the Italians.
11. In brief, the essential difference between the two groups may be summarized as follows: Amann and Raffeiner are not "fighters". The disillusionment which they have suffered during the past two years has made them pessimists, and they feel that probably the only chance for the South Tirolese lies in their powers of persuading the Italians to see reason. As a result their basic attitude is negative. Guggenberg and his friends are fighters, optimists, and essentially positive in their attitude.
12. After several weeks of canvassing and intrigues, the Central Committee of the SVP met on 6 February to draw up a list of candidates for the new Directorate for submission to the party on 9 and 10 February. Present were all the district leaders of the SVP, except the most likely candidates for the highest posts, who were merely called in from time to time to answer questions. The Committee sat behind closed doors throughout the day, and it was not until late in the afternoon that they reached a compromise solution.
13. At the beginning of the day Amann informed the Committee that he had decided not to run for President in view of the opposition against him. Reichegger's pamphlet, however, had exactly the opposite effect to the one expected. It won for Amann a certain sympathy among the members of the Central Committee, who deplored its unfair insinuations. Amann, sensing this sympathy, expressed his willingness to reassume the Presidency if asked to do so. He defended his own views most ably, stressing his conviction that astute bargaining and diplomacy were better weapons than a futile show of force. He took the wind out of the sails of his critics by sharply attacking the weaklings and pessimists. In support of his own views he reported that the British Consul in Bolzano, Mr. Kelborne Kerr, had strongly advised the retention of himself and Raffeiner and the more moderate course which they represented.
14. Amann is an extremely clever and convincing speaker, and before the day was out he had won over the majority of the Central Committee. Only the Pustertal delegates still opposed his candidature.
15. In one point he failed. Realizing that Guggenberg was the most likely choice for the post of Secretary-General, he suggested the abolition of this post, and the appointment of two Deputy Presidents, one of whom should be simultaneously Chief Executive Officer. The Central Committee, however, rejected this suggestion.

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16. The final recommendations of the Central Committee were:

President	:	Erich Amonn,
1st Deputy President	:	Josef Menz-Popp,
2nd Deputy President	:	Dr. Friedl Volgger
Secretary-General	:	Dr. von Guggenberg.

In addition the Central Committee presented a list of twenty further candidates for the ten members of the Central Committee, and their four substitutes, to be elected at the party rally.

17. Neither of the two groups was satisfied with this compromise. Amonn openly expressed his fears that the divergencies between himself and Guggenberg would lead to a fatal lack of unity in the direction of the party. Guggenberg had the same fears, as he was convinced that Amonn would persist in his "negative" policy. One of the Fustertal delegates, a priest, stated that he found the solution so unsatisfactory that it was possible that the Church would withdraw its support of the party. However, after long private discussions all groups decided to give the solution a chance, and there was even a certain optimism that the team of Amonn-Guggenberg, if it could reach an understanding, might well produce the ideal middle policy for the circumstances.
18. The crisis, however, flared up again on the evening of 9 February - the first day of the party rally - at a confidential session of the Central Committee, at which Amonn suggested that the Secretary-General was only an "official" of the party and as such should be appointed by the Central Committee rather than elected at the party rally. At this Guggenberg announced his intention of resigning; whereupon Amonn stated that he too would resign. Both protagonists then explained their individual standpoints. In particular, Guggenberg stressed that he was not a radical, but that he did believe in a far more positive policy. The South Tirolese must make it clear to the Italians, that, if necessary, they would fight for their rights. Talk of the worthlessness of the Paris Agreement must cease. Action must be taken to mobilize world public opinion, and particularly the support of the many influential friends of South Tirol abroad.
19. The open exchange of views did much to clear the air, and at the end both Amonn and Guggenberg agreed to accept the posts assigned to them by the Central Committee. Amonn further agreed that the Secretary-General should be elected at the party rally.
20. On the following morning, however, Amonn went back on his word, and at the very beginning of the party rally proposed a resolution that the Secretary-General should be appointed by the Central Committee. He put his resolution to the vote without allowing any discussion, and the majority of the delegates, not realizing what was at stake, expressed approval of it.
21. Throughout the rest of the day, and particularly during the open discussion of the future policy of the party, Amonn repeatedly stressed his viewpoint of moderation combined with firmness, and further undermined the opposition by repeated attacks against what he termed the weaklings. The sentiments which he expressed so exactly corresponded with the mood of his audience that he secured a tremendous success.
22. When it came to the elections, Amonn was returned as President with 62,584 votes against 357. Menz-Popp was in turn elected First Deputy President with 60,578 votes against 2,160; Dr. Volgger Second Deputy President with 61,418 votes against 729.

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On the other hand, Guggenberg headed the members of the Central Committee with 62,022 votes, Baron Sternbach was second, while Raffainer only just got in at ninth place.

23. According to reports Amonn was clearly delighted at his success, which he had scarcely expected, but expressed regret that Raffainer had been treated so harshly. He is said to distrust Guggenberg, believing that he aspired to the position of President and is too hot-headed. Apparently, Amonn, who is somewhat of an autocrat, would like a "yes-man" for Secretary-General, who would execute his policy faithfully. Guggenberg is reported to be the more embittered of the two. His distrust of Amonn was naturally increased as a result of the incident concerning the appointment of the Secretary-General. He feels that Amonn is determined to continue his "negative" policy, and foresees trouble as he himself has no intention of playing the role of a "yes-man". Both, however, agree that in the interests of South Tirol they must seek a basis for understanding.

Comment:

1. Amonn scored a tremendous personal victory against strong opposition, as the result of his astute handling of the party rally. It is certain, however, that the strong line to which he committed himself in his speeches, and which largely explains his success, is mainly attributable to the opposition. Amonn is a man who swims with the tide, and there is no doubt that the opposition gained a considerable victory in forcing him to commit himself in the way he did.
2. The appointment of Volgger as Second Deputy President strengthens the representation of the opposition's viewpoint in the Directorate of the party. Menz-Popp is somewhat of a nonentity and was merely elected First Deputy President in recognition of his past services to South Tirol. In practice Volgger will be Amonn's deputy. Volgger's own position today lies between the two groups, although at heart he sympathizes more with the opposition. He has always advocated a strong policy - with the use of force, if necessary - and is likely to continue to do so; at the same time he is a realist and as such realizes that in the present situation diplomacy may be the better weapon. This explains his support of Amonn.
3. The fact that Guggenberg headed the list of the elected members of the Central Committee with over 62,000 votes, that Sternbach was second, while Raffainer (although fifth on the Central Committee's proposed list of candidates) only secured ninth place, reflects the strength of the opposition.
4. The opposition is much more strongly represented in the new Directorate, particularly as Dr. Tinzl and Canon Gamper (who are among the most influential members of the unofficial "Action Committee") both share the opposition's viewpoint. A stronger and more positive policy may therefore be expected. On the other hand, it is possible that the differences between Amonn and Guggenberg will lead to incessant friction in the new Directorate, and so to a further crisis, which could only be resolved by the resignation of one of them.

List of Successful Candidates

President:

Erich Amonn	62,584 votes
Baron Sternbach	249
Josef Menz-Popp	108

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List of Successful Candidates (Cont'd)First Deputy President:

Josef Mens-Popp	60,578 votes
Dr. Volgger	716
Herr Strobl	1,344
Dr. v. Guggenberg	100

Second Deputy President:

Dr. Friedl Volgger	61,418
Josef Mens-Popp	415
Dr. v. Guggenberg	206
Erich Amon	108

Central Committee Members:

Dr. v. Guggenberg	62,022
Frh. Paul v. Sternbach,	
Heinrich Puff,	
Sottriffer Anton,	
Dr. Silvius Magnago,	
Falter Dollinger,	
Dietl Hans,	
Karl Heiss,	
Dr. Josef Raffener,	
Lageder Alois.	

Substitutes:

Dr. Luis Sand,  
Steger Eduard,  
Trafojer Anton,  
Dr. Franz Rosch.

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